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INFO IGAD COLLECTIVE
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RHEHAAA/NATIONAL SECURITY COUNCIL WASHINGTON DC
RHMFIS/CDR USAFRICOM STUTTGART GE
RHMFIS/CJTF HOA FWD
RUEHDJ/AMEMBASSY DJIBOUTI
RUEKJCS/SECDEF WASHINGTON DC
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C O N F I D E N T I A L SECTION 01 OF 02 DJIBOUTI 000525

SIPDIS

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TAGS: PINS PREL PTER MASS DJ SO
SUBJECT: DJIBOUTI: FONMIN SEES 'SERIOUS THREAT' TO SOMALI TFG
REF: STATE 50007; DJIBOUTI 435

CLASSIFIED BY: James Swan, Ambassador; REASON: 1.4(A), (B), (C), (D)

1.(C) Summary: Describing current al-Shabaab attacks as a "serious threat" to the unity Transitional Federal Government (TFG) of President Sharif, Foreign Minister Mahmoud Youssouf welcomed the urgent USG financial support provided May 15 to the TFG. He reiterated the GODJ request for USG assistance for Djiboutians to train Somalia security forces, beginning with close protection personnel. Youssouf said he would attend a Wednesday, May 20, meeting in Addis Ababa of the Intergovernmental Authority on Development (IGAD), at which he would press for further support to AMISOM and the TFG security forces. Noting that the al-Shabaab have been bolstered by weapons shipments from Eritrea and a growing number of foreign fighters, Youssouf warned that friends of Somalia are now in a "race against time" to save the TFG before it is overwhelmed by opposition forces with extremist ties. If they succeed in Somalia, he feared, their next target will be Djibouti. End summary.

DANGEROUS DEVELOPMENTS IN MOGADISHU

2.(C) Ambassador and DCM met morning May 18 with Foreign Minister Mahmoud Youssouf to deliver ref A demarche. Predictably, Youssouf said the GODJ shared completely the USG position on the need for a ceasefire in Mogadishu and for Eritrea to end its role as regional spoiler, including in Somalia. Noting reports that Jowhar had fallen to the al-Shabaab the night before, Youssouf said the TFG faces a "serious threat" from extremists linked to al-Qaida (AQ). He assessed that AQ-affiliated foreign fighters, under pressure in Iraq and Pakistan, see Mogadishu as a new target of opportunity. They are exploiting divisions within Mogadishu's predominant Hawiye clan by rallying support from the Habr Gedr against President Sharif's Abgal sub-clan. Eritrea has backed these efforts, he said, including by sending four re-supply flights in the days leading up to last week's attacks. And more Eritrean flights continue. If these threats to the TFG are not quickly reversed, "we can just draw an 'X' through Mogadishu and the TFG," Youssouf warned. Friends of the TFG are in a "race against time" to back Sharif before his opponents overwhelm him. He welcomed the USG financial support provided to the TFG May 15 and urged that more be done.

3.(C) Youssouf said IGAD Foreign Ministers would meet Wednesday, May 20, in Addis Ababa to discuss the Somalia situation. Youssouf said he would push for additional support to AMISOM and the TFG security forces. He welcomed information from the Ambassador that the UN Security Council had agreed that assessed contributions could be used to support AMISOM and that residual equipment from UNMEE had also been transferred to AMISOM. Youssouf said he would propose at the IGAD meeting that a change in AMISOM mandate is needed to make it a "peace enforcement operation."

DJIBOUTI READY TO TRAIN SOMALI TFG FORCES

4.(C) Youssouf reiterated the request for USG assistance to the GODJ to train Somali forces (Ref B). He said that President Ismael Omar Guelleh had personally chaired a meeting with Somali TFG military representatives and GODJ Chief of Defense Forces Fathi Ahmed Houssein to determine training requirements. Youssouf said the GODJ intended to begin with an initial group of approximately 200 Somalis to be trained in close protection techniques at the Djiboutian Gendarme training center at "PK 23" -- 23 kilometers from Djibouti City. The GODJ seeks immediate USG support for this training, including supplies for the PK 23 site, transportation of the Somali trainees from Mogadishu, and USG trainers to supplement Djiboutian personnel. Ambassador explained that the Embassy's Security Cooperation Officer (SCO) had obtained

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a detailed list of GODJ requirements from the Djiboutian military, which we will transmit by hand to the Department (AF/RSA).

5.(C) COMMENT: Senior GODJ officials for months have been urging greater international support to TFG security forces. Youssouf appeared genuinely alarmed by the current threat to the TFG, seeing this a critical moment for the survival of President Sharif's government. While we defer to the Somalia Unit for analysis of the situation, from Djibouti there appears an urgent need for further support to the TFG to counter the dangerous combination of al-Shabaab, new inflows of foreign fighters, disaffected Habr Gedr, and Eritrean financing and supply. END COMMENT.

SWAN